

## USDA Provides Updated Forecasting Information for Soybean Rust

Prompted by tropical storm Arlene's strong winds, which battered the Gulf Coast June 11, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) today announced that it is updating its soybean rust (SBR) Web site [www.usda.gov/soybeanrust/](http://www.usda.gov/soybeanrust/) to show where SBR spores may have been blown. SBR, a wind-borne fungus, has been found this year in Florida and Georgia. It is believed that hurricane activity in late 2004 spread SBR to the United States from South America.

The information available on USDA's SBR information site includes an interpretation of weather patterns, ground observations and state-by-state commentaries. This information will enable growers to make informed decisions about applying approved fungicide treatments at the best time. Predictive models show South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, most of Tennessee, eastern Louisiana and the southwestern part of Kentucky were at risk of wind-borne spore dispersal from the hurricane. After hitting the Gulf Coast, the storm moved northward, so marginal SBR spore deposition is also possible in eastern Arkansas, southeastern Missouri, the lower Ohio Valley and the central Appalachians.

Because SBR has been reported in only a few locations in Florida and Georgia this year—mainly on kudzu and one case on volunteer soybean plants—spore levels are relatively low. Therefore, it is unlikely that large quantities of spores were carried into nearby states by Arlene. Still, there is much that is unknown at this time about SBR and how it may affect the United States. USDA and its cooperators will not always be able to pinpoint exact areas where the disease may spread. Therefore, producers are advised to talk with soybean specialists in their states, and to look at the observation and state update screens on USDA's SBR Web site to follow the progress of sentinel plots and scouting in their local areas for actual occurrences of SBR. Experience in foreign countries where SBR occurs has taught us that fungicides should not be applied too early, even if spores are present.

In upcoming years, USDA will continue to learn more about the epidemiology of SBR, as well as the effect of meteorological and biological variables here in the United States, to improve both short and long-distance predictions for the spread of SBR spores.

Because SBR is a wind-borne fungus, USDA has prepared for its arrival and spread in the United States by focusing on how best to manage the effects of the disease. With the goal of providing stakeholders with effective decision-making support for managing SBR in the 2005 growing season and into the future, a coordinated framework is now in place for disease surveillance, reporting, prediction, management and outreach. The framework was developed in cooperation with APHIS, the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, the Agricultural Research Service, as well as state departments of agriculture, land grant universities, industry and the National Plant Diagnostic Network.

The basic goals of the framework are to:

- Develop a surveillance and monitoring network to provide timely information of the incidence and severity of SBR in the United States, Caribbean basin and Central America;
- Provide a Web-based system for information management of monitoring observations, forecasts and decision criteria for fungicide application;
- Provide predictive modeling of aerial transport of SBR spores from active source regions to soybean-growing areas in the United States;
- Provide outreach for training, education, interpretation, of Web-based SBR monitoring and prediction displays, and dissemination of information.

USDA is continuing to work with its cooperators to assure that the SBR Web site is frequently updated with weather, including information on tropical storm Arlene, and surveillance information that is used by state specialists on their interpretation of SBR in their state and ensure that it is timely and reflects storm or other SBR related activity.

For additional information on soybean rust, please visit our Web site at <http://www.usda.gov/soybeanrust/>.

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